



December 5, 2003

Felon is sentenced to 2 & ½ years for carrying a gun

Providence Police arrested Aaron Smith shortly after intensifying firearms investigations

A federal judge today sentenced **Aaron Smith**, 24, of Providence, to 30 months in federal prison for being a felon in possession of a firearm. Smith had a handgun on him when Providence Police approached him on Prairie Avenue in May.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the sentence, which Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres imposed today in U.S. District Court, Providence. Smith was one of the first defendants arrested after Providence police intensified enforcement of federal and state gun laws in the wake of a series of shootings in the city.

At the sentencing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Gerard B. Sullivan said that Smith had the misfortune to be carrying a gun in the wrong place and at the wrong time. It was the wrong place, he said, because, "Providence Police were aggressively attacking the gun problem and the department was intensifying patrols of gun-plagued neighborhoods." It was the wrong time because the department had recently undergone a training, sponsored by the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives**, on how to spot signs that an individual might be carrying a firearm.

At a hearing in September during which Smith pleaded guilty, Sullivan said that, while patrolling Prairie Avenue on May 6, Detective Gregory Sion and Patrolman David Depina

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observed Smith exhibiting mannerisms causing them to suspect that he might be concealing a firearm.

The officers questioned Smith and observed the outline of a gun in the pocket. They arrested him and the following day Colonel Dean Esserman asked the U.S. Attorney's Office to prosecute the case.

The U.S. Attorney's Office prosecuted the case as part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun violence. **Project Safe Neighborhoods** was the initiative behind the firearms training that ATF sponsored. About 150 police officers from several departments attended the training, which took place in February.

Providence Police and **ATF** investigated the case.

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